


Apology Now

A conversation about Mormon racism



I understand that you boys
had some questions for
me about the Book of
Mormon.
What's on your mind?




Now gramps, I understand that you have a bunch of good friends who are Mormon and you enjoy getting together with your LDS friends... And you really want us to see what you see in the faith.



But have you actually
read the Book of
Mormon? There is
some racist crap in
that book!

How am I supposed to
accept that God would
support such things?



Sure, I understand why that might upset you. The truth is, some of the past church members have brought some of their own racism into the church - but the scriptures are not racist. You are probably not looking with the right spirit.




In 2 Nephi it says that
God turned the
Lamanites skin dark
and cursed them
because they were
wicked!

What is the right spirit
to interpret that?



It even has God
telling the Nephites
that if they marry
the dark skinned
Lamanites, their
kids will be cursed.

That is the most
vile racist thing
ever, and the book
says God said it!

An elderly man with white hair and glasses, wearing a green jacket, is shouting in a kitchen. His mouth is wide open, and his eyes are wide. The background shows kitchen cabinets and a red range hood.

Okay, There are some things you have to understand about the Book of Mormon.

First, it was translated from 'reformed egyptian' and so sometimes the words in english don't exactly convey the original meaning. That's called an 'idiom'.

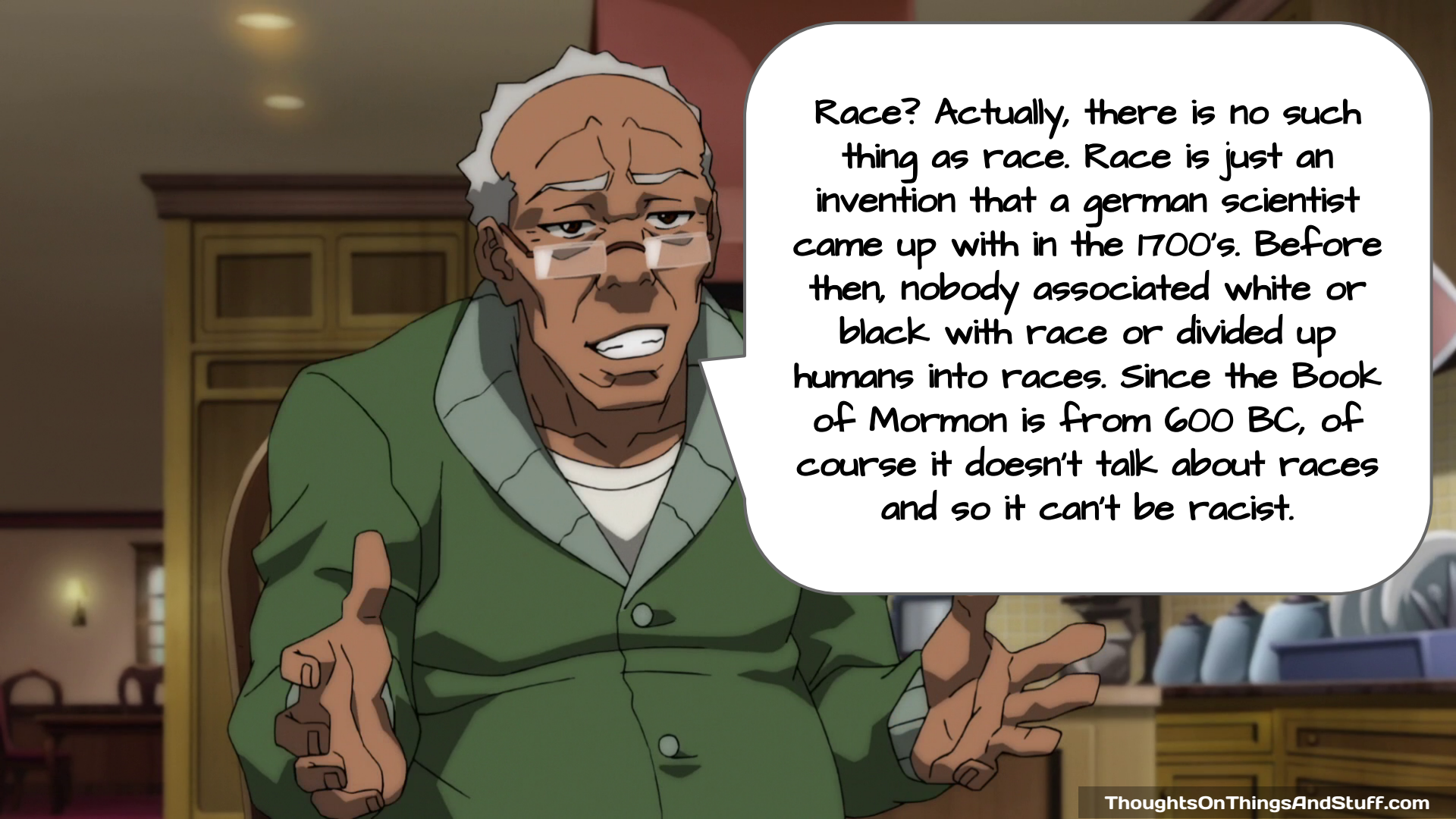
So anytime you read "skin" it really means spiritual state. Anytime you read "black" or "dark" it means gloomy or unrighteous. Anytime you read "curse" it really just means the separation from God that happens when you sin. Simple, really.



So when it says "God caused a sore cursing to come upon them because of their iniquity and did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them" - what it really means is that their spirits were gloomy because of their sin and they were separated from God?

It has nothing to do with skin color or race?





Race? Actually, there is no such thing as race. Race is just an invention that a german scientist came up with in the 1700's. Before then, nobody associated white or black with race or divided up humans into races. Since the Book of Mormon is from 600 BC, of course it doesn't talk about races and so it can't be racist.






For over 100 years the men of the black race were unable to hold the priesthood, have eternal families, go to the temple or even give blessings to their own family!

That was based on a scripture in the Pearl of Great Price where it says a black man was cursed "as pertaining to the priesthood".

After all those Black Mormons suffered as second class children of God because of their race, you are going to tell me there is no such thing as race?!



You're right. Those things were racist, but they were just policies created by imperfect men who interpreted the scriptures with their own racist views.

They didn't know about the idioms.

Remember, Christ was the only perfect man. Prophet's aren't perfect. The Scriptures aren't racist. The church is true!





Look, I know it can seem confusing. When I was investigating the church, I had this feeling when I read the Book of Mormon - I knew it was true!


When I look at the church and the scriptures now, I start with that knowledge.

You can make arguments to support any perspective. Since I already know it's true, then I only accept explanations that support it.





What?



I was just waiting for
you to finish.

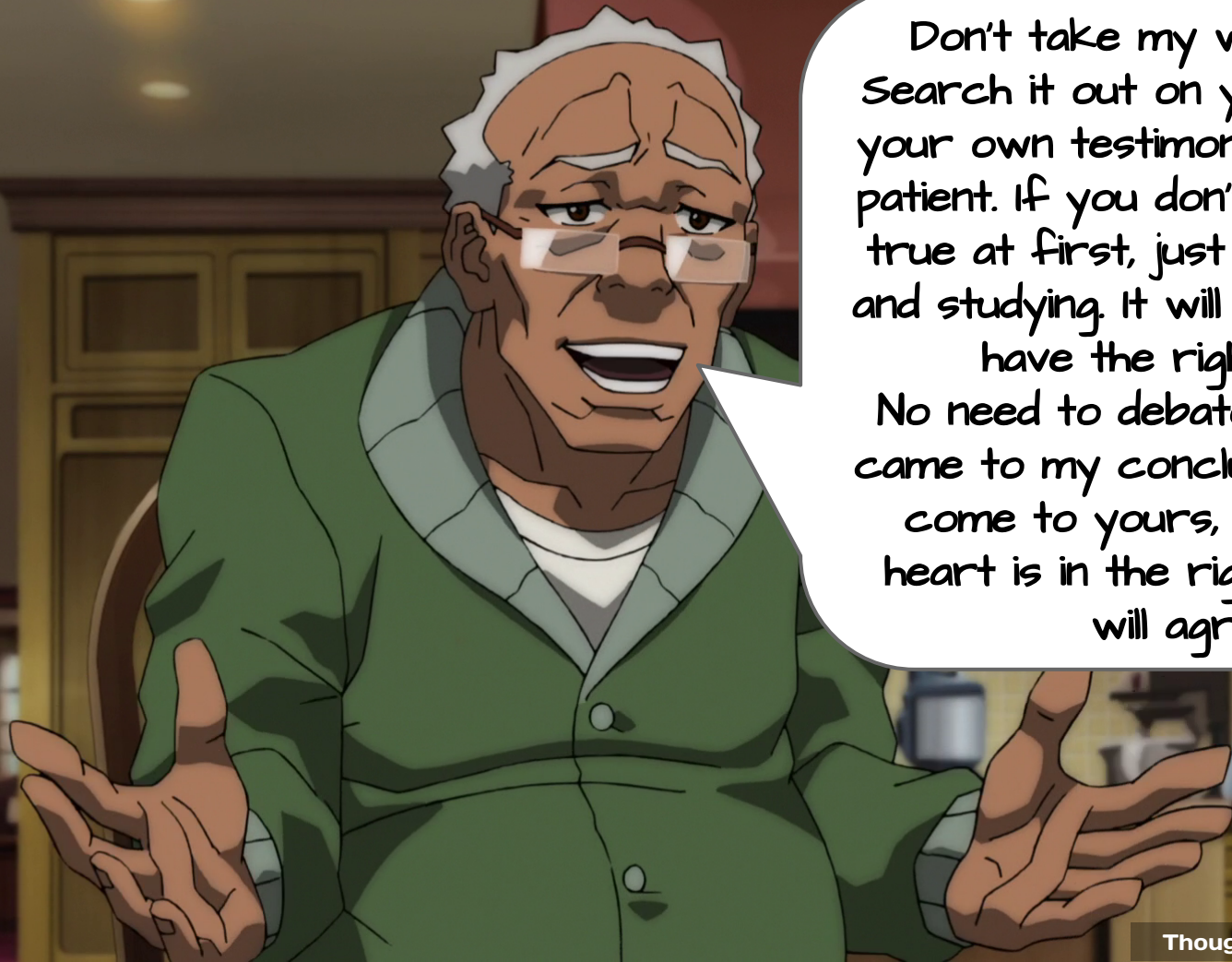
I like to see how high the
pile of crap gets
stacked before I start
to shovel it.



It's not crap. It's all there in the scriptures. If you can't see it then it just means that you haven't been studying your scriptures daily or you are following Satan's lies!



Go on...



Don't take my word for it.
Search it out on your own. Get
your own testimony about it. Be
patient. If you don't feel that it's
true at first, just keep praying
and studying. It will come - if you
have the right spirit.
No need to debate my points. I
came to my conclusions, you will
come to yours, and if your
heart is in the right place, we
will agree



Okay. First of all, let's call you out on that rhetorical embarrassment.

A brother does not introduce a highly implausible and convoluted rationalization that absolves powerful bigots of all culpability for past ecclesiastical abuse and flagrant racism and then guilt-shame people into not disputing his points.

A coward does that.



There you go again -
talking about race! I
told you - there is no
race! Dividing up
mankind into "races"
of different color
was an invention of
Johan Blumenbach in
1775. We didn't talk
about colored races
before then so there
is no way the
scriptures did either!



There is my next point..
From a human rights perspective,
there is only one human race.

But, from a biological and
sociological perspective, races are
an undeniable fact.

While divisions among people have
not always been along skin color,
people have always tended to view
'others' as *less than* themselves and
this ethnocentrism is what drives
racism and bigotry in all its forms.

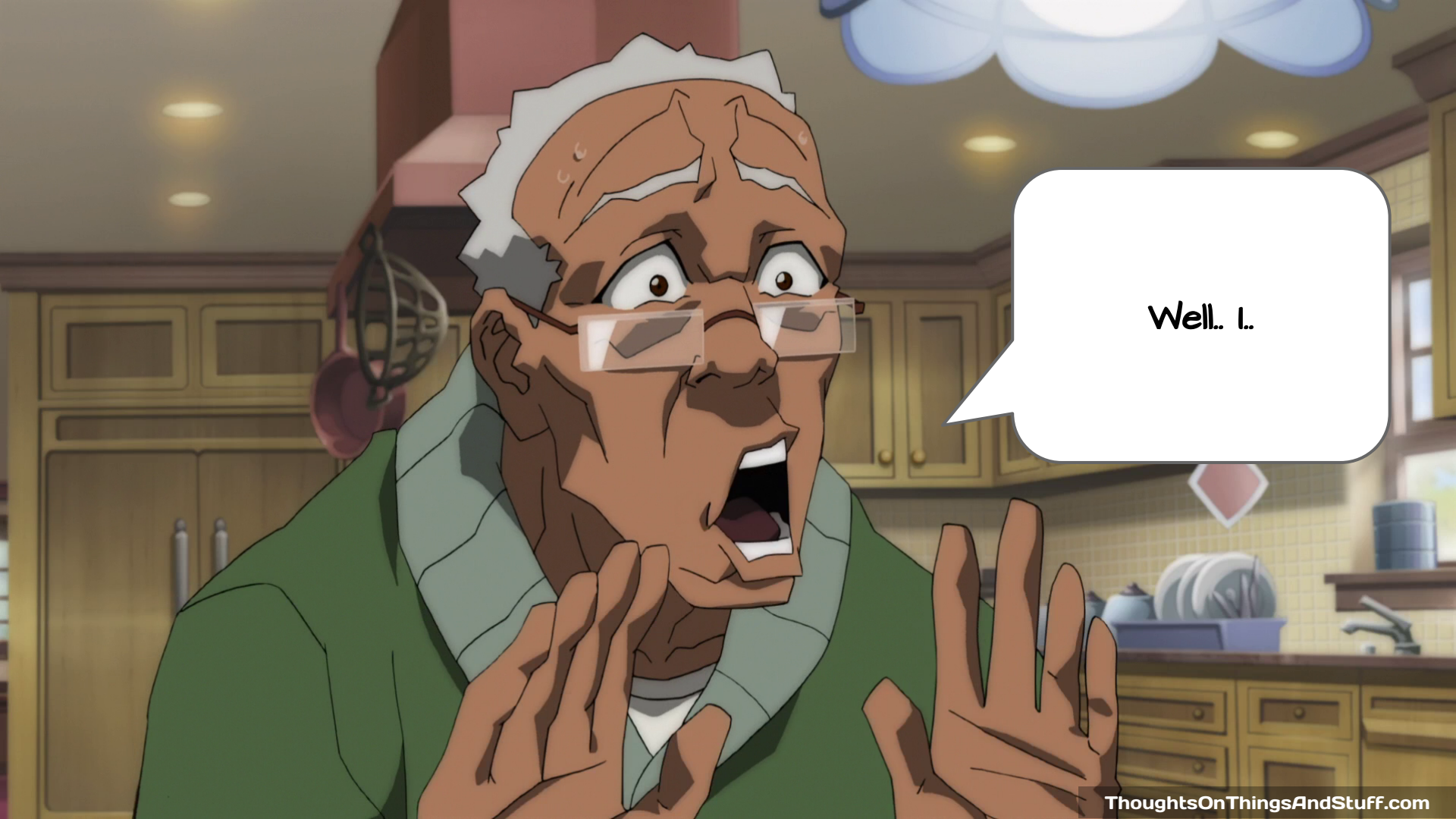
Men in power give this tendency its
expression through oppressive
doctrine, policies and law.



Before our understanding of genetics and evolution differences of geology, skin color, facial features, culture and religion were the main ways that men identified themselves and drew the lines of oppression.

5 Minutes on Wikipedia will demonstrate that men were expressing racism based on color far earlier than 1775. The very word "Negro" means black and originated with the Spanish slave trade which predates Blumenbach by hundreds of years. You don't think slavery is race based?





Well.. I..

That was a rhetorical question.
Case in point - In 1700 a white judge, Samuel Sewall, came to the aid of a black slave whose master backed out of promised freedom after 7 years of indentured servitude. Sewall had a pamphlet printed called "The Selling of Joseph" which was the very first abolitionist literature. It used the Bible to make the case that "negro slaves" have "equal right unto liberty" - it started new thinking about slavery and spawned the abolitionist movement.




While Sewell used the Bible to argue against slavery in 1700 - do you know who would use the Bible to defend slavery over a hundred years later?

The Prophet Joseph Smith.

Your denial of the very notion of race as a means to defend this religion with a vile history of racism is an affront to every black man and woman who was told that they deserved to be black because they were less righteous in the pre-existence.



An elderly man with a stern, angry expression is shown from the chest up. He has a balding head with white hair on the sides, a large nose, and a wide-open mouth as if shouting. He is wearing a green jacket over a grey collared shirt. His right hand is extended forward, with his index finger pointing directly at the viewer. The background is a blurred indoor setting, possibly a kitchen or a workshop, with wooden cabinets and a sink visible. A speech bubble originates from the right side of the image, containing two lines of text.

Now you hold it right there! I am
your elder and you will respect
me! I am telling you that you don'
t understand the idioms in the
scriptures!

The words don't mean what you
think they mean!


It's true that you are my Elder,
but you are also proof that
wisdom doesn't always come
with age.

Idioms? "skin" really means
spirit, "black" means gloomy?
Do you know how ridiculous
you sound?

Remember that it was by the
Power of the Priesthood
through the Holy Ghost that
the Plates were supposedly
translated.


If those were the real
meanings, then that's what
would be written!





Besides, there are examples in the Book of Mormon where skin color played a role.

Remember in Alma 3 the Amlicites distinguished themselves from the Nephites...

An elderly man with a green jacket and a brown scarf is shown in a kitchen, shouting with his mouth wide open. He has a determined and somewhat angry expression. His hair is white and spiky. The background shows kitchen cabinets and a sink.

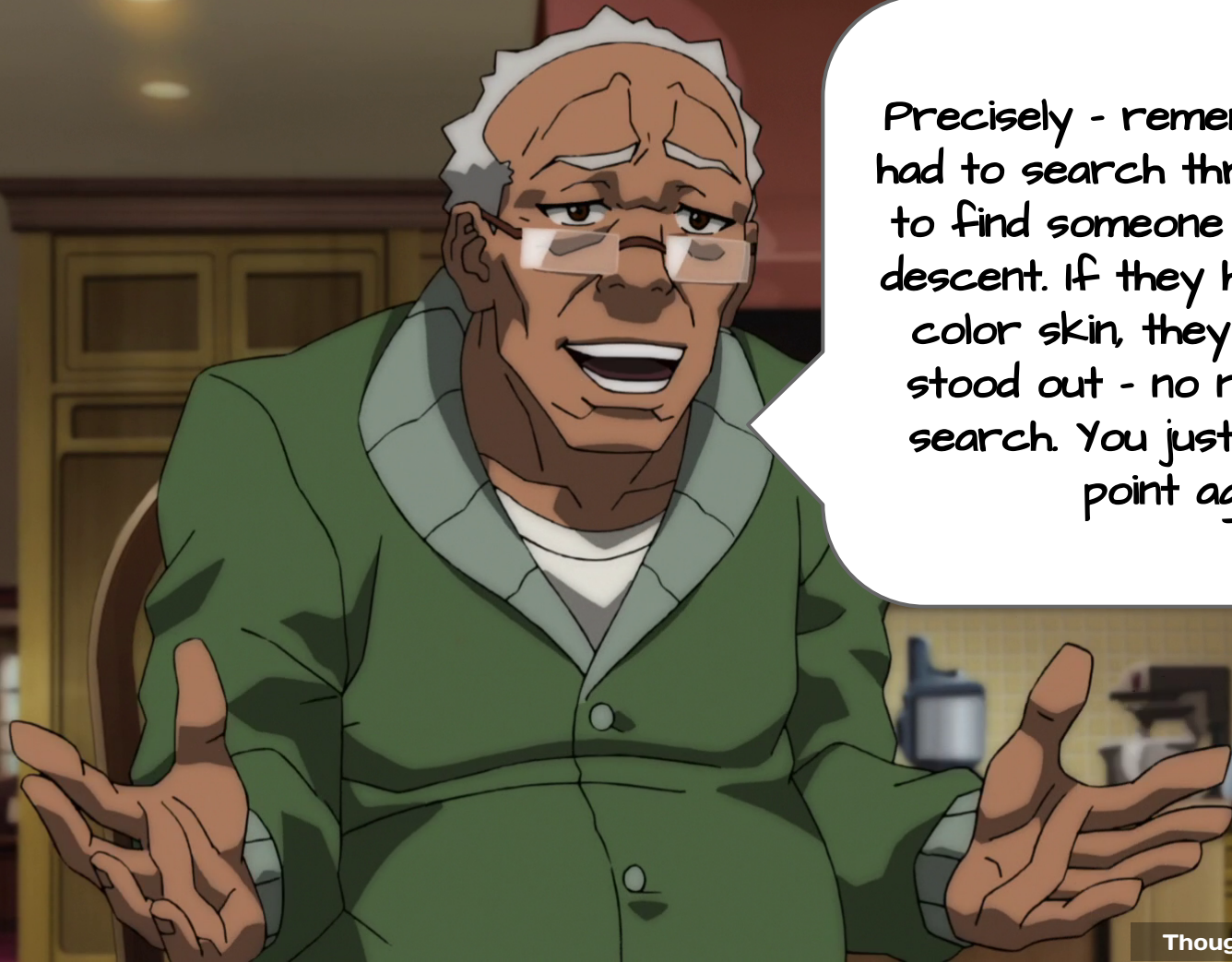
That's right - The Amlicites put a mark on their foreheads. If they were a different skin color, then there would have been no need for them to mark their foreheads. You just proved my point..

The Amlicites were a breakoff from the Nephites.

They had to distinguish themselves from the Nephites because they had white skin like the Nephites - THAT is why they put a mark on themselves - to match the dark skins of the Lamanites. It disproves your point.

Next, There is the time when Captain Moroni wanted to trick the Lamanites guards by getting them drunk so he could free their prisoners...



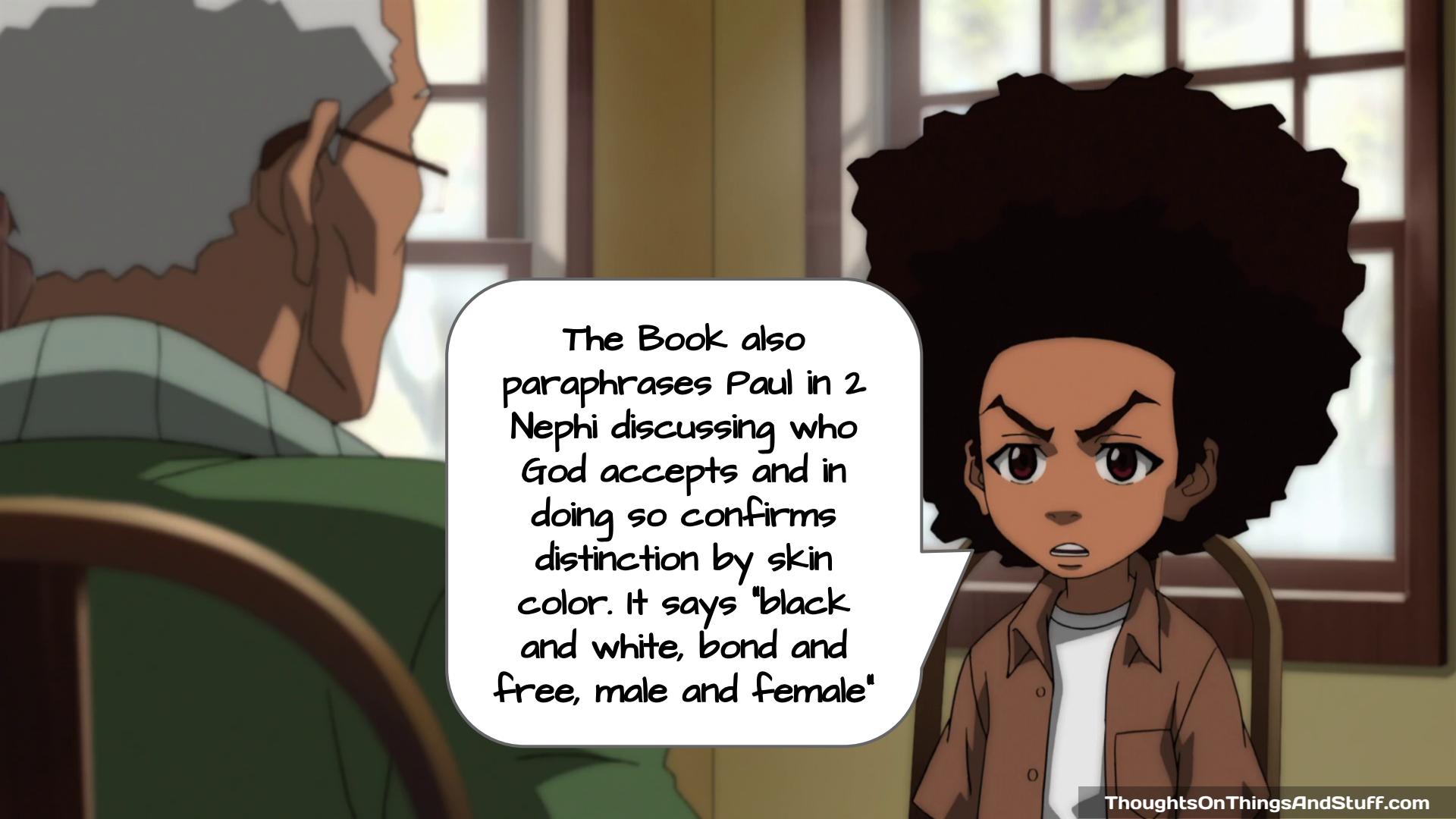


Precisely - remember that he had to search through his men to find someone of Lamanite descent. If they had different color skin, they would have stood out - no need to do a search. You just proved my point again.


Listen to yourself! If there was no skin color difference, then there would be no need to search for a Lamanite descendent in the first place.

Your argument is pointless beyond that - if a stake president wanted to find a black member in his stake - he would have to do a search to locate him even though black mormons stand out.





The Book also
paraphrases Paul in 2
Nephi discussing who
God accepts and in
doing so confirms
distinction by skin
color. It says "black
and white, bond and
free, male and female"




"black and white" just refers to righteousness - not skin color. You have to remember the idioms.

If you do a google search of 18th and 19th century publications which preceded the Book of Mormon for the phrase "black and white" and "bond and free" together - they are always in reference to race and slavery. Every time.

If you search LDS.org for that scripture - it always attributes it to race. Every time.






You are just looking for racism where it doesn't really exist. In 2010 The church changed headings and footnotes to match these explanations of the idioms.

Really? You expect me to buy into the whitewashing that the church is doing, by noting that the church is the one doing it?

If the KKK told you that burning crosses were just idioms for a burning heart of Christian love, and then added footnotes to all their literature supporting that claim - would you believe them?



An elderly man with a balding head, white hair on the sides, and glasses is shown in profile, shouting with his mouth wide open. He is wearing a green jacket over a light blue shirt. His hands are raised in front of him, palms facing up, in a gesture of emphasis or pleading. The background is a kitchen with wooden cabinets and a tiled backsplash. A speech bubble is positioned to the right of the man, containing text.

You just don't understand!
Mormons aren't racist!
Those scriptures were just
misinterpreted by Church
Leaders who set policy. The
church has always been fair
and good to black people!

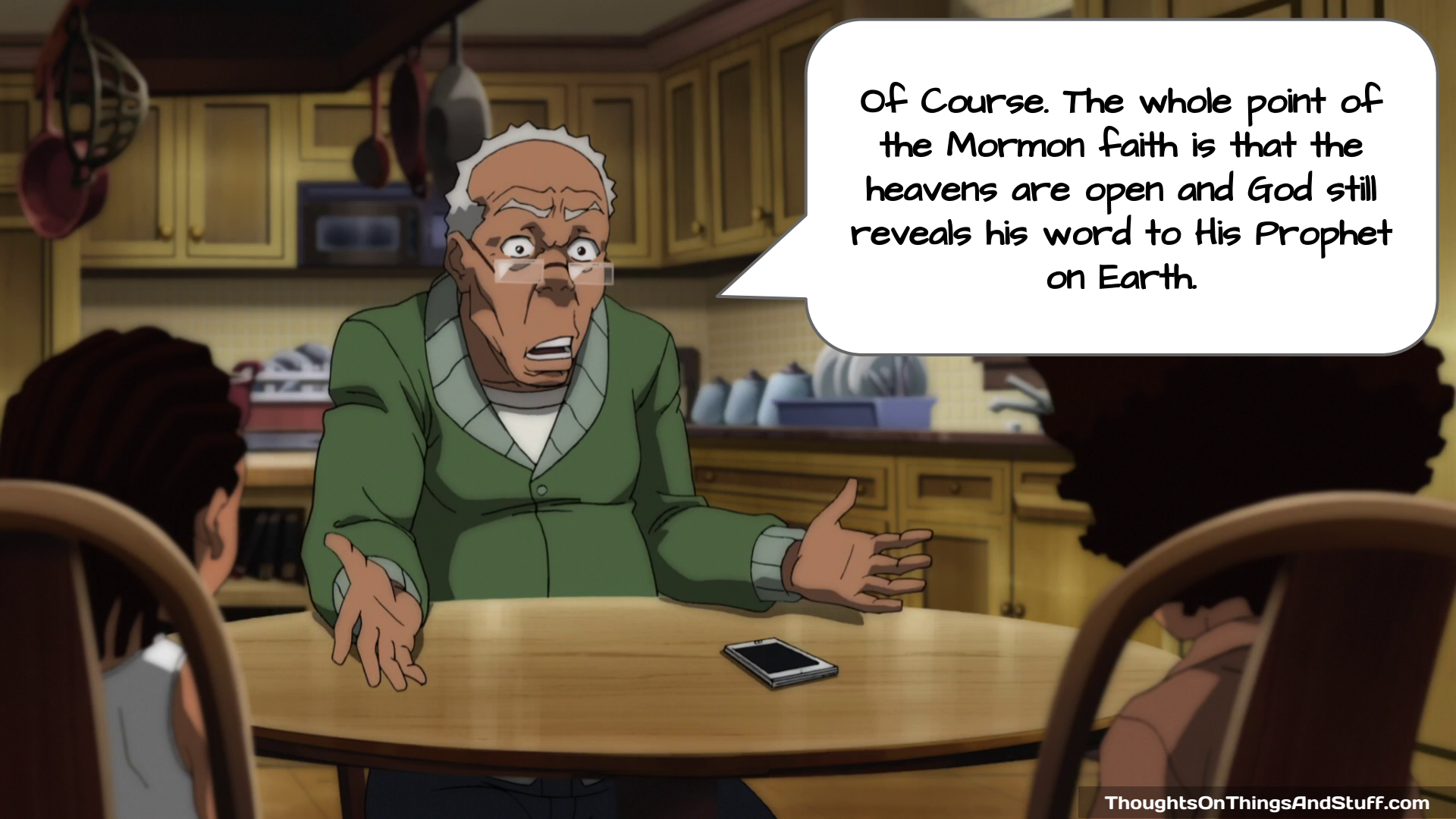
Okay. Let's be clear. I am not arguing that Mormon people are racist. I am telling you that Mormon scripture, doctrine and policy have been and are ethnocentric. This mentality of "us and them" has extended to people of different race, nationality and religion in the past. It is currently being focused on atheists and homosexuals.

Since you mention the Church Leaders - let's talk about that...



You believe the Mormon Prophet and Apostles are God's spokesmen on Earth, right? That they are the ones who are the most in tune with God's will and word?





Of Course. The whole point of the Mormon faith is that the heavens are open and God still reveals his word to His Prophet on Earth.

And, yet - those Prophets
weren't inspired enough to
correctly interpret their own
scriptures?

They said God promised them all
the gold and silver in Salem. Any
true Prophet of God would
reveal racial equality first.

They allowed white people in the
church to have eternal families -
but denied that to the black
members for over a century.

Why should I ever trust them
about anything?



Both Brigham Young and Joseph Smith defended slavery as a divine institution.

Brigham Young actually accepted a slave as payment for tithing. You expect me to revere such men as a prophets of God?

You want me to trust them over my own inner voice?


Because my conscience tells me these men and what they taught were not of God.



Speaking of Temples and Tithing. The first temple recommends were to show proof that a member had paid tithing in full. White members were rewarded for paying tithing by going to the Temple.

Black members couldn't go to the Temple -
BUT THEY STILL WERE EXPECTED TO PAY TITHING!



An elderly man with white hair and a green robe is shown in a kitchen. He has a pained or angry expression, with his mouth wide open as if shouting or crying out. His hands are pressed against his ears, suggesting he is trying to block out a sound or is overwhelmed. The background shows a typical kitchen with wooden cabinets, a tiled backsplash, and various kitchen items like a coffee maker and a dish rack. A speech bubble is positioned to the right of the man, containing text.


I don't think you have the
right spirit. Now.. now - You
have the spirit of
contention...

You're damn right. That is what you do when you are confronted with the evil of racism attributed to God - you contend with it.

Any man who would preach bigotry and claim to be God's spokesman gives you the proof of his fraud. Period.

Contend is what Jane Manning James should have done when she begged to be sealed to her family in the Temple and in the end was only sealed as a servant for Joseph Smith - An ETERNAL SLAVE!





I don't... Listen - I had a special feeling when I read the Book of Mormon and prayed about it. It has to be true! The Church is true!

You do know that there are several Mormon sects that believe the Book of Mormon, right? Just because you believe the book is true doesn't mean that the branch of Mormonism that followed Brigham Young is the true one.


The reorganized Church never believed black men incapable of holding the priesthood - why would you choose the UTAH group over them?



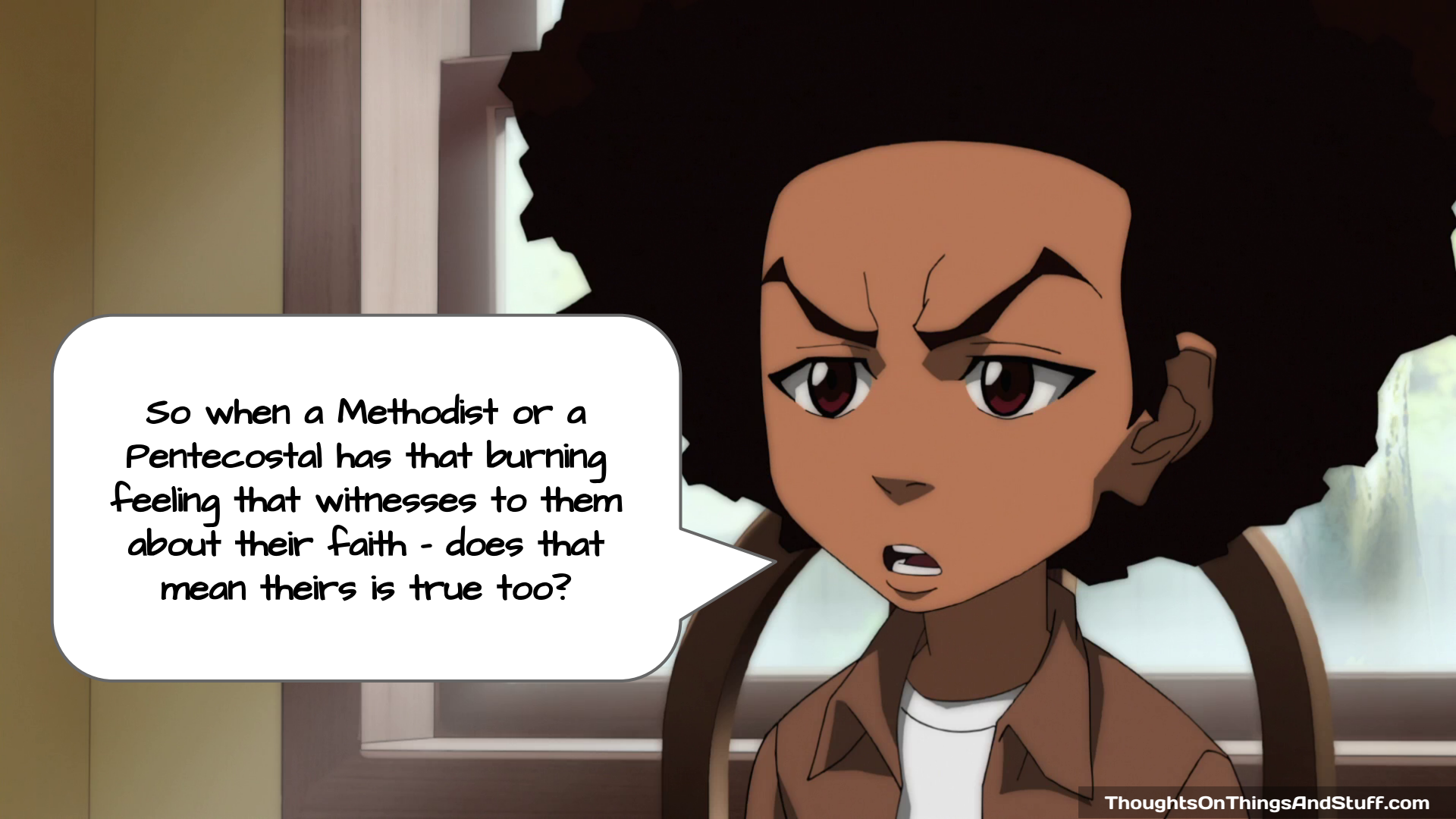
That's not even the point,
though. You say you know it is
true because you had a special
feeling.

Who told you that a special
feeling means that it's true?






That's easy - It's in the Book of Mormon. It's Moroni's challenge. The missionaries told me about it. I tested it and it worked.



So when a Methodist or a
Pentecostal has that burning
feeling that witnesses to them
about their faith - does that
mean theirs is true too?

An elderly man with white hair and a green robe is shown in a kitchen, covering his ears with his hands and shouting. He has a pained or distressed expression. The background shows a kitchen with wooden cabinets, a red range hood, and various kitchen items on the counter.

But, it's not the same.
The Holy Ghost testified
to me. That's not what
they experience.
My experience was the
most profound and
meaningful thing I have
ever felt.



That's exactly how they
describe their own experience.

Feelings are just feelings. They
don't objectively determine truth.

I understand that you need it to
be true because you have given
so much of your life to the
organization...



All my friends are in the church!
I'm not stupid or racist and
neither are they - What do you
expect me to do?!

I expect you to give me a good example to follow.

Don't deny blatant racism when it exists. Don't excuse the people who taught it and don't minimize the impact it had on blacks who trusted those leaders above their own conscience.

They were forced to paint their own spiritual shackles gold and testify about how much they deserved them.





The Church
Apologized for their
racist policies!!!

Gordon B. Hinckley
met with Episcopal
Pastor Chip Murray
and gave a heartfelt
apology...

He apologized in a private meeting to a pastor of another faith?

What about apologizing openly to black mormons! They were openly subjugated by years of racist policy and doctrine - by the Church's own standards Black Mormons should be the ones receiving an open apology.

A private apology from pastor to pastor did nothing more than to save him from the embarrassment of his own religion's racism without being accountable for it..



You taught me to keep my
dignity and not subject myself
to abuse.

Who is the worst villain - the
master who keeps black men
under the boot of oppression
or the self styled Prophet
who teaches them that they
deserve to be there?



At least the slave knew that he was worth more than his station in life allowed him - he could fight for his freedom.

Black Mormons for over a century surrendered their dignity to the notion that their very identity as black was a deserved stain that justified whatever hardship they suffered - If he fought it he was excommunicated - spiritually assassinated



These are not ideas that Black men and women would ever create or accept for themselves!

Those white Prophets told them to "get their own testimony" of the lie that they were failures in the pre-mortal life!

I do not excuse the slave masters who broke the backs of my black fathers -
Why should I excuse the Prophets who made them think they deserved it!?



No.

Any Man claiming that he will speak God's will by priesthood authority who then brings such a vile and heinous lie forth as God's word is impeached as a Prophet.

His claimed authority is counterfeit.

Any other leaders who claim the same mantle deserve no reverence and can command no deference from any honorable and self respecting person of conscience - white, black or any other color.





Gah! What do you want me to do about it? I was raised Mormon - It is my cultural identity! All those other churches have racism in their history too - it is just a fact of society.

That's fine, keep on being Mormon - But stop excusing the racism in scriptures - call it out for what it is.

Stop absolving church leaders past and present for what was taught to thousands of black families.

Stand up for yourself. Stop paying tithing until the church actually publicly apologizes to its own black members for what it taught and did for over a century.



But, the current Prophet didn't personally condone the racism! Those were past leaders. He shouldn't have to apologize for what people in the past did which he had no control over!



First of all, the current Prophet was an Apostle during the racist era. He gave no public speeches against the racist false teachings during that time.

Second, and more importantly - The organization endorsed and taught false racist things for over a century as the unquestioned word of God. The current stewards of the church have the full authority and duty to act on behalf of the organization. They would be apologizing on behalf of the Church, not themselves.



But.. if I tell people that I will not pay any more tithing until there is a public apology, then I might upset the church leaders.. they might take away my temple recommend or even excommunicate me!



How much time should the slave have spent worrying that he might offend his master by claiming his rights as a human?

Was the whip a sufficient excuse for the slave not to aspire to freedom and dignity?

Did the fact that they would kick her off the bus deter Rosa Parks from taking her seat and demanding respect?

Those are your forbears.
They risked much more.



The church is fond of saying
"we don't need your tithing"
Well guess what. We need, no,
demand their apology.

Any socially conscious member of
the rising generation who studies
church history and sees what was
done under the heading of God will
reject this church outright - unless
the leaders take the step to
acknowledge that
they were wrong
and that
they are sorry.



They should also know that we will never blindly trust them again on matters of social equality. They have lost all credibility for conveying God's word in that matter. There is no way to reclaim it.

There is no argument which could be made against women holding the priesthood, which was not also made against blacks holding the priesthood. They were wrong on blacks - how long before they admit they are wrong on women?






Yes, I am speaking with the
spirit of contention.

Dignity must contend with
bigotry, hatred, and the idea
that the powers that inflict
those evils should do so with
impunity.



I can't really think about this right now. I have a High Priest group activity, and then I need to go help clean the Chapel and then I am going to prepare a lesson for church tomorrow. There are just too many things on my plate right now.



While you are on you knees scrubbing
the toilets for a multibillion dollar
corporate church which could
afford to pay for that service...

... Think about it.

